

NEWS RELEASE

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Business Manager Sentenced for Defrauding Former Employer

Springfield, IL - Jan Paul Miller, United States Attorney for the Central District of Illinois, announced that Mark J. Werner, age 43, of O'Fallon, Illinois, was sentenced today to six months in prison, followed by six months home confinement, for defrauding his former employer, the Central Illinois District of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod in Springfield, Illinois. U.S. District Judge Jeanne E. Scott further fined Werner \$15,000 and ordered him to pay \$40,870 in restitution to the synod office, both within two weeks. Werner is to report to the federal Bureau of Prisons on January 5, 2006, to begin serving his sentence.

Werner pled guilty in July 2005 to misusing the synod office's credit cards to purchase personal items, including meals, groceries, household supplies, and hotel and motel stays, for himself and his family from June 2001 to mid-July, 2003. Werner also admitted diverting disbursement checks intended for the fund to his personal account.

Werner began employment in January 2001 as business manager for both the Central Illinois district office of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod and the Church Extension Fund, which functioned similarly to a credit union for churches, religious schools and church agencies.

The charges were the result of an investigation by the Illinois State Police. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Patrick J. Chesley.

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